

historical ecology or Amazonian landscapes. In addition, the introduction, the brief linking chapters, and the concluding essay helpfully link his findings to contemporary concerns and will be of particular interest to graduate students who might wish to follow the transformations in environmental anthropology over the last generation.

There is inevitably, in such a collection of essays, a certain amount of repetition across chapters. This is only a minor issue, as it also allows for a historical reflection on the relationship between the findings in each chapter and the broader field of ecological-environmental anthropology. For example, Balée's summary of the emergence of historical ecology in relation to the formerly dominant frameworks of cultural ecology and optimal foraging theory (which paid little attention to the capacities and intentions of indigenous people) sets the stage for his own empirical research, which highlights the capacity of indigenous people to understand and modify their environments. In the core chapters, Balée draws on the differential ethnobotanical knowledge of various Tupí-Guaraní peoples, on inventories of tree and shrub species found in forest plots, and on analysis of ethnographic and historical accounts of these peoples. He demonstrates that many apparently "natural" landscapes have been powerfully impacted by historic cultivation practices and that at least some foraging groups were formerly more sedentary horticulturalists.

When Balée began his career, a key tenet of Amazonianist anthropology was that tropical soils were too poor to support sedentary societies and that, therefore, indigenous people in Amazonia were trapped in a nutrient-poor environment that they were powerless to modify. This is far from the truth, as the author shows: he describes the formation processes and characteristics of widely distributed anthropogenic soils known as *terra preta do índio* (black earth of the indian). These soils are visibly different from poorer surrounding soils and are always found on old settlement sites. Soils then are yet another element of the landscape that can be modified by intentional and unintentional human action. Other evidence of landscape design includes the presence of extensive earthworks in many Amazonian landscapes. Overall, he estimates, based on the presence of

plant species encouraged and preferred by humans, at least 11.8 percent of *terra firme* (non flooding) forests of various kinds are of cultural origin. Although no such number can be exact, this figure represents a startling transformation in what we thought we knew about the history and nature of the Amazon.

In a concluding chapter, Balée argues that it may be helpful to replace the ecological terms *primary* and *secondary succession* with *primary* and *secondary landscape transformation*, bringing the long-term relationship between humans and landscapes to the center of ecology and anthropology. Emphasizing landscape transformation links work on the history and domestication of landscapes with current thinking in ecology, in the set of approaches that Balée calls "historical ecology" (Balée 2006). In this book, he is naturally more concerned with Amazonian and other tropical forests; he suggests that historical ecology can contribute to restoration ecology and to demonstrating the need to protect anthropogenic landscapes in other areas. I suggest, additionally, that studying how political and economic formations have emerged in relation to past anthropogenic landscapes will be critical to addressing what is being called the "anthropocene," this era in which every aspect of the world biogeochemical system is increasingly affected by human action (Sayre 2012). In *Cultural Forests of the Amazon*, Balée has opened up avenues for thinking about how matter can enter politics and history and how politics might emerge from the encounters between humans and nonhumans.

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The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India by Sarah Besky.

California Studies in Food and Culture, 47. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. 264 pp.

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Although many people may suspect that fair trade will not save the world, it is nevertheless instructive to examine the

question of "is something better than nothing?" so frontally. Sarah Besky compels us to face the issue in an ethnography that draws on years of fieldwork in the tea plantations of Darjeeling in India. She collected data as well as tea leaves working alongside Gorkha women tea pluckers on the Darjeeling slopes, and her ethnography is substantially the richer for its closeness to their daily lives. Her research

commenced less than a decade after the award of “Geographical Indication” (GI) status that restricts the use of the term “Darjeeling tea” to the product of 87 clearly demarcated “tea gardens” in the region. Originating with artisan-made luxury comestibles associated with a specific place (such as Champagne and Roquefort), GI status was legally extended to Darjeeling tea in 1999, and it is backed up by the World Trade Organization’s Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. It was at the same time that a number of Darjeeling plantations began to receive organic and fair trade certification, and finally Besky’s stay also coincided with the second phase of the Gorkhaland agitation, a subnationalist insurgency demanding the carving out of a new Indian state of Gorkhaland from the existing state of West Bengal. Besky structures her account by casting each of these three developments—GI status, fair trade certification, and the Gorkhaland agitation—as a strategy for justice for the laboring classes of Darjeeling.

Unsurprisingly, they all fail to deliver due to their unwillingness to question the inherently exploitative plantation form, a legacy of British colonialism. Each initiative spawns its own euphemisms—thus, the GI narrative sees bearers of “traditional knowledge” gliding through tranquil “tea gardens” rather than peasant proletarians tied to a harsh plantation system. It must be said that Besky’s characterization of GI as a strategy of justice for the women tea pluckers is not convincing. Even in its most idealistic version, GI claims to champion ownership of “traditional knowledge” rather than workers’ rights, and its tools of niche marketing and product differentiation are unapologetically aimed at promoting consumer discernment rather than social justice.

Fair trade definitely does set itself up as a strategy for justice, however—it operates by explicitly linking the ethical consumption practices of privileged classes to the socioeconomic upliftment of impoverished producers. Besky’s indictment of the failures of fair trade in the Darjeeling context is easily the strongest part of the book. She notes that the leading certification body, Fairtrade USA, does not distinguish between cooperative farms and plantations. Plantations are deemed to be “large farms,” their owners and managers are regarded as “farmers,” and there

is no awareness of the rights that are already available to Darjeeling plantation workers. Thus, the Plantation Labour Act of 1951, a hard-won achievement of Communist-backed labor unions, has long guaranteed for workers the provision of housing, healthcare, food rations, schooling, and so on. The obliviousness of the fair trade bodies to local histories of struggle means that planters are able to use fair trade premiums to pay for the baseline PLA costs (and gain kudos in fair trade circles for the social spending that was already required of them by Indian law). Instead of benefiting from the expanded profits, workers become resentful performers and stagehands in the colonial-era “tea garden” theme park that is opened up to the tourist trade. While Besky derides this spectacle, it is noteworthy that she does not investigate Darjeeling’s hegemonic mood of Raj nostalgia across the board. When Gorkha workers voice their longing for the mythical British gentlemen planters (and critique of the present-day ethnically Bengali planters), Besky swiftly transfers these articulations into the unexamined and unimpeachable heap marked “moral economy.”

This is a missed opportunity to think more deeply about the material histories of ethnic tensions in postcolonial India and to provide a richer account of the Gorkhaland agitation. Besky casts the agitation as yet-another botched attempt at justice that fails because it does not challenge the plantation itself, preferring instead to train up ethnically Gorkha planters. This rings true, but the ethnic assertion and mobilization driving the demand for Gorkhaland does not fit easily into the book’s somewhat-cramped framework of strategies of justice.

While Besky draws on Sidney Mintz as a “pioneering food system scholar” (p. 5), his mode of analysis has largely remained a road not taken in this book. An analytic separation between the domains of production and exchange would have lent clarity from the very outset: grounded in the realm of exchange, initiatives such as GI and fair trade are unlikely to improve production conditions. Besky also does not follow Mintz in his classical Marxian emphasis on production, which might have yielded an invaluable ethnographically grounded discussion of surplus value extraction in contemporary plantations. Hopefully such work is still to come.

From Prehistoric Villages to Cities: Settlement Aggregation and Community Transformation by Jennifer Birch, ed.

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How do societies hold together? Social integration is one of the key puzzles of the human sciences. After a period of dormancy, anthropological research on social integration has reawakened, thanks to new work on cooperation and

collective action. This volume presents an archaeological perspective on a key question: How do newly formed communities hold together and flourish after episodes of aggregation? The emphasis is on empirical patterns, with occasional use of concepts from environment-behavior theory that relate both social-structural and built-environmental changes to population size and density (e.g., work by Gregory Johnson and Roland Fletcher).